



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Audio comments from U.S. Attorney Todd Graves, photos from today's press conference and court documents related to this case may be downloaded from the district's Web site at www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow.

FORMER SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT PLEADS GUILTY TO EMBEZZLING \$844,000

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that the former superintendent of the Pattonsburg School District pleaded guilty in federal court today to embezzling more than \$844,000 from the school district.

Ronnie Gene DeShon, 50, of Gallatin, Mo., waived his right to a grand jury indictment and pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Howard F. Sachs this morning to a federal information that charges him with program fraud. **DeShon** was the superintendent of the Pattonsburg, Missouri R-II School District from July 1, 2000, until he resigned effective Oct. 13, 2004. The court released **DeShon** on his own recognizance.

By pleading guilty, Graves said, **DeShon** admitted that he embezzled \$844,477 from the school district over a four-year period between Sept. 6, 2000, and Oct. 13, 2004.

"This is public money that should have been spent on teachers and textbooks," Graves said, "but instead went into his own pocket. **DeShon** wasn't just stealing from some government program; he was stealing from the children in his schools and the taxpayers of the community."

"For a school district of this size, already operating on a tight budget, such a theft hits hard financially. Because of **DeShon's** fraud, at the time of his resignation in October 2004, the district's bank account had a balance of only \$14.

"But this goes beyond the dollars and cents," Graves added, "because **DeShon** was a respected school official and long-time educator who abused the public's trust."

Among **DeShon's** duties as superintendent was to insure that funds from the Missouri Securities Investment Program (MOSIP) were transferred into the school district's bank account at Bethany Trust Company. MOSIP is a funding mechanism for Missouri school districts. MOSIP receives federal and state funding for school districts, then disburses the funds to individual Missouri school districts. MOSIP transfers funds, which are used to cover operating expenses, into the Pattonsburg School District's individual MOSIP bank account.

In September 2000, Graves explained, **DeShon** faxed information regarding his personal bank account at Northwest Missouri Regional Credit Union to MOSIP officials, claiming that the account was a second account of the school district and directing that funds designated for the school district were to be sent to that credit union account. **DeShon** then sent orders via his office computer to MOSIP instructing it to wire transfer funds into his credit union account. MOSIP, not realizing that the account was actually **DeShon's** personal account, followed those instructions.

In order to conceal his fraud, **DeShon** generated false accounting entries to show the MOSIP account had the correct amount of funds; he also posted false accounting entries to show the account had earned \$60,000 in interest.

"**DeShon** acknowledged in court that he was addicted to gambling prior to his employment with the school district," Graves added, "and that much of the embezzled money was lost gambling."

Under federal statutes, **DeShon** could be subject to a sentence of up to 10 years in federal prison without parole, plus a fine up to \$250,000 and an order of restitution. A sentencing hearing will be scheduled after the completion of a presentence investigation by the United States Probation Office.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Linda Parker Marshall. It was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at
www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow